Superfast charges

†*249. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that no superfast charges are levied upto 325 kms.;

(b) if so, since when and if not, the reasons therefor and by when it would be put into effect; and

(c) the number of trains likely to become ordinary as a result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) Superfast surcharge is not levied only on season ticket holders travelling by those superfast trains whose total journey is less than 325 kms. from originating to destination station. All other passengers travelling by these trains are being levied Superfast surcharge.

(b) This has been put into effect from 1.9.2006.

(c) No train has been rendered ordinary train because of this decision.

Survey for decreasing agricultural land

†*250. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the area of agricultural land is decreasing constantly in the country;

(b) whether any survey has been conducted with regard to constantly decreasing agricultural land and farmers;

(c) if so, the details of the surveys conducted during the years 1960-61, 1970-71, 1980-81, 1990-91 and 2000-01; and

(d) the details of the steps being taken by Government to enhance agricultural production and to encourage farmers towards agriculture?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) According to National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO) report of

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

59th Round published in August, 2006, the total area operated for agricultural production and total number of operational holdings as per the survey in its various rounds are given below alongwith the rates of change

Year	NSS Round	Total area operated (million hectare)	No. of operational holdings (million)	Percentage rate of change	
				Total area operated	Total no. of holdings
1960-61	17th	133.48	50.77		
1970-71	26th	125.68	57.07	(–)5.84	12.41
1981-82	37th	118.57	71.04	(–)5.66	24.48
1991-92	48th	125.10	93.45	5.51	31.55
2002-03	59th	107.65	101.27	(–)13.95	8.37

Source: Some Aspects of Operational Land Holdings in India, 2002-03; NSSO, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (August, 2006)

(d) Some of the major steps initiated by the Central Government to enhance agricultural production and to encourage farmers towards farming are given below:

- Integrated Cereal Development Program (ICDP) in rice, wheat and other cereal-based cropping system areas, sustainable Development of sugarcane based cropping system and special jute development programme.
- Integrated Scheme of Oilseeds, Pulses, Oil Palm and Maize (ISOPOM), is implemented in several States for increasing the yield potential of oilseeds, pulses, oil palm and maize.
- Increase in the rate of public investment in sectors such as irrigation, watershed development in rainfed areas, rural road connectivity, rural electrification.
- Announcement of Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) well before the commencement of sowing season to enable farmers to decide on the crops to be grown by them.
- Agricultural diversification through horticulture and floriculture.

- Public—Private partnership is encouraged in the development/ strengthening of agricultural marketing infrastructure, grading and standardization.
- Reorientation of banks towards extending credit, especially production credit, to rural and farmer households at concessional rate of interests.
- Contract farming to attract corporate investors.
- Revitalization of agricultural research to ensure full exploitation of scientific advances for improving productivity according to agro-climatic conditions.
- Revitalization of agricultural extension system through Krishi Vikas Kendras in each district and making extension system farmer friendly by way of autonomous institutional arrangements for technological dissemination in the form of "Agricultural Technology Management Agency" (ATMA) at district level.
- Setting up of National Rainfed Area Authority has been approved to deal with the problems faced by rainfed areas.

Strengthening PDS

*252. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Public Distribution System has weakened over the years;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of the steps Government propose to strengthen PDS and to distribute all essential commodities through PDS?

THE MINISTER OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) No, Sir. The increasing trend of offtake of foodgrains year after year shows the improvement in the performance of Public Distribution System in the country:

(Lakh tonnes)

All India basis	Offtake of foodgrains (year-wise)			
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07 (upto 9/06)
	239.31	293.55	311.05	150.45